

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights



December 13, 2013

Topic: *“Leading the Way in Information Security, Policy, and Compliance”*

Dr. Annie Antón is a triple Georgia Tech grad – she got her BS in 1990, her Masters in 1992, and her Ph.D. in 1997 – but she didn't start off at Tech. She began college at Mercer University, but was told by a professor after two years that she should transfer to Georgia Tech and major in computer science. She did.

Annie also shared that she likely would never have gotten into Georgia Tech right after high school because she is dyslexic and has ADHD, but found that as long as she is given extra time for tests (she got a special allowance of extra time for Calculus tests), she can more than compete in any setting.

Annie is the daughter of Cuban immigrants who came to the USA with \$80. Both parents are psychiatrists, and she believes that they fueled her early interest in privacy issues. (Annie shared that she is the only non-physician in the family, and is hence the “black sheep.”) Her parents had the Hippocratic Oath posted in their home. It read, “Whatever I see or hear in the lives of my patients, whether in connection with my professional practice or not, which ought not to be spoken of outside, I will keep secret, as considering all such things to be private.”

As the internet and the use of software has grown in the past decades, Dr. Antón has seen also the growth of huge challenges to privacy, and has seen also how challenging regulation, often written by lawyers with little understanding of software development, is for the software engineers who are writing software. Much of her work is trying to integrate the work of policy makers, lawyers, and software writers.

Annie is the founder of The Privacy Place, an organization staffed by an inter-disciplinary team of researchers from Georgia Tech's School of Interactive Computing and North Carolina State University's Business Management department and devoted to disseminating information in the form of research results and relevant technical privacy developments in an effort to aid policy makers, software developers and public citizens.

Dr. Antón gave several examples of ambiguous wording (“‘reasonably’ anticipated threats and hazards” and “‘promptly’ document and implement”) and she now often consults with lawyers writing law. She says she once heard from an attorney, “We never thought about the fact that you had to write software to comply with the regulation!”

Others in the group commented on situations in their own companies when the press did secret exposes, and talked about the stress on leaders and employees. Dr. Antón asked a provocative question, “Are we headed for a constitutional crisis on the balance of security and privacy and freedom of the press?”

Dr. Antón is the only woman on a DoD advisory board, and is the only woman in many situations. She talked a bit about how she handles the situation. She said that she is always polite, and raises her name tent when she wants to speak. She said, though, that she isn't intimidated. When someone interrupts her, she raises her voice slightly and finishes her point.

Learn more about [Annie Antón](#).